

# Holding the

Story and Photos by MSG Bob Haskell

**D**.C. National Guard soldiers helped metropolitan and federal police officers keep peace in the nation's capital when thousands of protesters came to Washington to disrupt an April meeting of world finance ministers.

SFC Sheila Bennett of the 274th Military Police Company was the senior noncommissioned officer for the 43 Guard soldiers assembled in a cold, soaking rain near the World Bank and International Monetary Fund buildings, where many of the demonstrations took place. Bennett said that when she joined the D.C. Guard's military police force a few years ago, she sensed that, sooner or later, she would help deal

MSG Bob Haskell works for the National Guard Bureau Public Affairs Office in Alexandria, Va.

with a civil disturbance.

"I figured there would be something like this at some point in time," said Bennett, who reminded her soldiers to keep their flak vests fastened, face shields down and gas



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masks ready.

"The Guard gave us the additional resources we needed. Had they not been here, we'd have lost the line, and the outcome would have been quite different," said D.C. Metropolitan Police Chief Charles Ramsey.

Civic leaders were determined to prevent Washington, D.C., from becoming another Seattle, Wash., where protests led to violence and looting during the World Trade Organization's meeting last year.

"It was amazing to see all of the destruction that a few people could do," said MAJ Aaron Dean II, a plans and operations officer for the District of Columbia's 260th MP Command.

"In Seattle the looters owned the streets for a while," he said.



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# Line in D.C.

"I didn't want that to happen here."

Compared to the Seattle protests, the weekend-long D.C. gathering was relatively peaceful, as demonstrators for the most part limited their activities to chanting and flag-waving in the streets and to their principal demonstrations near the IMF and World Bank buildings on April 17.

"I'm relieved that cooler heads prevailed. This showed that there can be peaceful demonstrations in our cities," Ramsey said.

Nearly 700 Army and Air Guard members, including security personnel from the D.C. Air Guard's 113th Wing at nearby Andrews Air Force Base, Md., were called to active duty to help make that possible.

"They gave us the chance to take a little break, and there's greater strength in numbers" said police officer Phillip Thompson, who had been working 16-hour days for the preceding week and gladly welcomed the assistance.

This was the fifth time



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SSG Melvin Scott had pulled demonstration duty. He spent a year as a marine MP after a tour in Vietnam and also worked as a Pentagon policeman before joining the U.S. State Department's diplomatic security force.

It was

the first time for SSG Thomasine Howerton, who would have been working as an accounting technician at the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home that Monday had she not been on duty at the demonstration.

"This doesn't bother me, not after Operation Desert Storm," she said.

"I'm here to do my duty. I was trained for

